



## December: It's not just for Christmas anymore

Carol Rempp

*Oh Hanukkah, Oh  
Hanukkah,  
Come light the  
menorah.  
Let's have a  
party,  
We'll all dance  
the hora.*

I remember singing this song in elementary music classes and never really understanding it. Oh sure I knew that Jewish kids celebrated Hanukkah instead of Christmas but since there weren't any Jewish families in our town it really didn't mean that much to me. It was just another song to sing during music class. Reflecting back on those days as I prepared this newsletter I began to think of the many students across Nebraska who, like me, are growing up in towns where the only winter holiday celebrated is Christmas.

Last week as I traveled across Nebraska I saw many towns with Christmas lights up—everything from candy canes and Christmas trees to snowflakes and Nativity scenes. I love seeing all the lights especially with all the snow. It is so beautiful and colorful and makes the long winter nights seem a little warmer. However, I also thought about those who do not celebrate Christmas or who cannot afford to celebrate Christmas. I wondered about the kids who will not have trees and lights and Santa presents. I wondered about the new immigrants to this country who celebrate different winter holidays. I remembered a story I had read recently about the beauty and history of the Jewish Celebration of Lights, Hanukah. I was reminded that although as Nebraskans we are not as diverse in culture as some other areas of the country we are still not all the same. Many towns settled by European immigrants still celebrate their home country winter traditions. We do have many communities with Jewish families or African immigrant families who will be celebrating traditions of their families. Even in Nebraska we have

families living in homelessness and such adverse conditions of poverty that the hope of even a warm meal on Christmas day may not be a possibility.

As you prepare for your winter break and attend Christmas programs and concerts I encourage you to remember that there are many other celebrations that occur this time of year by various cultures. Part of developing cultural competency is learning about others customs and traditions. It is more than a bunch of kids singing a song about dreidels or lighting a menorah. Take time to talk with your students and give honor to those who will celebrate other holidays this winter and about those who cannot celebrate Christmas. Also, take time to remember our troops who are so far from home this holiday season defending our rights to as Americans to celebrate Christmas and Hanukah and Kwanzaa or not celebrate anything at all.

Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year. The song "Silver Bells" and Gene Autry's Christmas album remind me of my Grandma Rempp. I love to spend time with family and friends and do all of the holiday baking I can manage. The celebration of Christmas by communities across the state is a good thing. Remembering that some folks in our state are celebrating other winter holidays is also a good thing. It is only through the discussions and joys we find in celebrating our rich and wonderful variety of cultures and traditions that we learn to give value to each other and that is when we will find true Peace on Earth.

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## **Website Resources for Winter Holidays Around the World**

About.com Hanukkah

<http://judaism.about.com/od/holidays/a/hanukkah.htm>

Enchanted Learning Hanukkah

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/hanukkah/>

Enchanted Learning Kwanzaa:

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/kwanza/>

The official Kwanzaa website: <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>

The History Channel Kwanzaa website: <http://www.history.com/content/kwanzaa>

The History Channel Hanukkah website: <http://www.history.com/content/hanukkah>

Kulture Kidz...Learning about African American culture website:

<http://aakulturezone.com/kidz/abc/kwanzaa.html>

A Festival of Lessons

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson213.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson213.shtml)

Winter Celebrations from National Geographic Kids:

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Stories/PeoplePlaces/Winter-celebrations>

Winter Customs Around the World from About.com:

[http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/yulethelongestnight/p/Winter\\_Customs.htm](http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/yulethelongestnight/p/Winter_Customs.htm)

Celebrate Winter Holidays with Scholastic:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/holidays/>

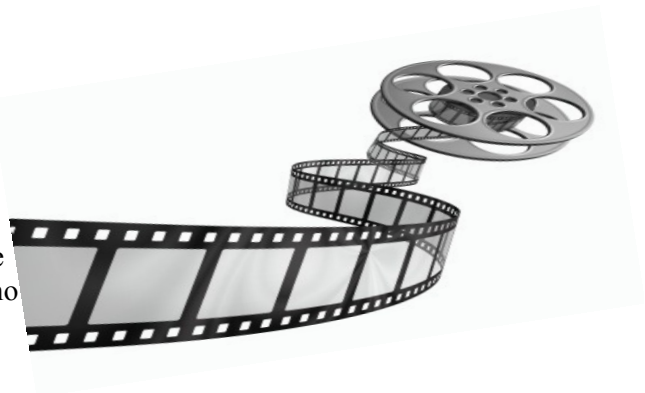
Winter Celebrations Around the World—A webquest for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies

<http://www.rblewis.net/technology/EDU506/WebQuests/xmasparty/xmasparty.html>

## **NIEA Newsletter link**

[Read about the new released movie \*\*NEW MOON\*\* with Native American actors](#)

A sequel to TWILIGHT. An adaptation of Stephanie Meyer's second novel, the film tells the story of the wolf pack from the Quillete Tribe who defend humans against vampires lead by Edward Cullen (played by actor Robert Pattinson) and his family.



## You Enough?

November 2009 By: Dr. Martin Brokenleg

Vice President & Co-Founder, Reclaiming Youth International

Several days each year, I lead training days for teachers, child-workers, and parents. On those days, I sometimes have a few minutes during breaks to speak with individuals. I am impressed with the dedication and effort I see among teachers and youth workers. I am sometimes breathless when I see the love parents have for their children.

Often when I travel to a training day, taxi drivers, hotel clerks, or fellow travelers ask me what I am going to. My usual answer is that I help adults who work with kids find the best ways to keep kids out of trouble. Usually the driver or traveler nods the head and smiles saying something like how necessary the task is. Sometimes I understand that the questioner realizes the seriousness of life for today's youth. At other times, I know the questioner is remembering raising children and may chuckle at the memory. Only an occasional questioner seems to be cynical about youth.

Thinking about these responses, I ask myself how can a parent, youth worker, or teacher keep a focused consciousness about youth and their own ability to deal with the tasks facing them as they interact with youth?

I sometimes talk about the negative effect excess television has on youth. The Search Institute, in an early study entitled, *The Troubled Journey*, identified excess television as a deficit for youth. One negative effect of television is the teaching about life and behavior that it portrays. Without a trusted adult present to comment on images and programs, a child can absorb teaching that is not in the child's best interests. I am particularly concerned about the sophisticated psychology used in advertising. Advertising may claim to speak to the positive qualities of a product when in actuality the psychological attention in the ad is directed to the values of youth (and adults). Although the message of the ad is spoken or in print words and so is conscious, the message really aims at the viewer's values and is visual, subtle, and unconscious.

Some examples of this psychological manipulation may include: "Without the kind of laundry detergent we are selling, your life is not complete." "Smelling like a natural human being is unacceptable, so you must buy this deodorant." "You were not born with the right hair color and will be unattractive without purchasing our hair dye." "If

you don't drive our car you will lack status."

Of course, no advertiser is this open but the messages are consistent. The message is not stated directly but is a foundational assumption of the ad. Rational minds can see the message when analyzed separate from viewing an ad, but the unconscious message absorbed when viewing the ad is, "You, the viewer, are inadequate and unacceptable just as you are unless you purchase this product".

I am concerned that youth workers, teachers, and parents may be absorbing the message that they are not adequate to the tasks of their life and profession. The risk factors in lives of contemporary youth are many and ever changing. This is enough to shake the confidence of any adult. Working for youth is difficult. The message of advertising, that we are not enough, is disheartening.

This is what I see when I travel to do training: dedicated, well-meaning adults who care deeply about the children and youth in their care and who want to be the best they can be for their children. Whether in small towns, isolated reserves, or large urban areas, I see adults who have the inner strength to direct their youth in positive directions. I regularly come across valuable teachers and child workers who have the emotional abundance to motive their youth. I find loving and caring parents everywhere who will do anything to see their children grow to a happy life. I am so grateful to see these adults working for our kids.

The truth is that you, the parent, are enough, just as you are. You teachers are intelligent and dedicated enough just as you are. Youth workers are completely adequate, just as you are, with the skills that you have. I am not saying that we should not improve our knowledge and skills. I am saying that youth workers, parents, and teachers possess the dedication, the intelligence, and the skills that you need for your work. Believe and live as though you have all that is needed to support the kids in your care. Understand and work with confidence in the personality and emotional support that you bring to your career. The truth is, "You are enough just as you are. You carry this truth in your heart and need to see it each day."



## Designing a Classroom that Celebrates Diversity

### *Alliance for Healthier Generation*

Diversity is a value that is fundamental to school wellness and which includes the practice of respecting and representing individual differences across all elements of the school environment, including classrooms. Differences include but are not limited to religious beliefs, gender, age, lifestyle choices, communication styles, abilities, sexual orientation, economic backgrounds, culture and traditions, ethnicity or race.

As more and more students from diverse backgrounds attend our classrooms, and efforts mount to identify effective methods to teach all students, the need for instructional approaches that are culturally responsive intensifies. To meet this challenge, teachers employ not only theoretically sound but also culturally responsive practices. Teachers create a classroom culture where all students regardless of their cultural and linguistic background are welcomed and supported, and provided with the best opportunity to learn.

Providing a classroom that is culturally responsive is linked to student motivation and, therefore, increased student academic success. Effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement. Therefore, teachers need to be committed to acquiring cultural information about specific ethnic groups represented within their classroom to make learning more interesting and stimulating, representative of, and responsive to all their students.

To develop culturally appropriate health education in schools, it is important to understand and address the key aspects of diversity such as culture, language, belief systems, perceptions, values and norms,

including embracing the differences of customary eating habits and diverse cultural norms of students and communities.

Tips on becoming a culturally competent teacher that incorporate learning strategies, teaching methods and materials that are culturally inclusive:

- Use curricular materials that are free of culturally biased information, but also include information, activities and examples that are inclusive of diverse cultures and lifestyles (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, physical/mental ability and appearance).
- Use communications strategies that are culturally responsive to ensure appropriate messages are getting through in an appropriate manner.
- Use teaching strategies that promote values, attitudes and behaviors that support the cultural diversity of students; optimize relevance to students from multiple cultures in the school community; strengthen students' skills necessary to engage in intercultural interactions; and build on the cultural resources of families and communities.
- Identify barriers to healthy behaviors and take action. The class may identify a section of the community that is not safe for walking and biking to school and work with local officials to improve the safety of the area.
- Design lessons that view health issues from different perspectives. For example, have students create two meal plans with one that includes a budget and compare ability to purchase healthy food items.



[Deadline: January 29, 2010](#)

## **WHERE ARE MY PARENT(S)???**

[New guide for parental engagement](#) from PTA

A new publication from the National PTA provides key facts, background, analysis, noteworthy statutes, and policy state PTAs and other family and crafting successful school-legislation at the state level. The two declared purposes. It on family engagement education laws, so that families their children's education on the levels. It also guides advocate development of



recommendations for child advocates for family engagement reference guide has provides information provisions within state can better advocate for school and district policymaker and legislative reform monitor in place. Research children benefit from schools, and that

family engagement helps close educational gaps between children from different racial groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. "These are exciting times for the field of family and community engagement, given the renewed emphasis on shared responsibility in uplifting our nation's education system and standing in the global community," write the authors. "The time is now to advocate for bold policy reforms that support the advancement of systemic family engagement initiatives in all of our schools." In their view, implementation of state policies at the local school level is a critical component of achieving greater family engagement in education.

See the guide: <http://www.pta.org/3717.asp>



### **NEA: The Big Read**

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts to restore reading to the center of American culture by providing citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their communities. The initiative includes innovative reading programs in selected cities and towns, comprehensive resources for discussing classic literature, and an extensive website providing comprehensive information on authors and their works. Maximum award: varies. Eligibility: literary organizations, libraries, and community organizations across the country. Deadline: February 2, 2010.

[http://www.neabigread.org/application\\_process.php](http://www.neabigread.org/application_process.php)

### **Muzak Heart & Soul Foundation: Music Matters Grants**

The Muzak Heart & Soul Foundation Music Matters Grants for 2010 will focus on educational reform in school music programs and independent music programs across the United States. Maximum award: \$12,000. Eligibility: U.S. schools that already employ a music educator or educators and have an existing music program in place. Grant requests must articulate specific music program needs for existing and/or planned programs. Deadline: February 5, 2010.

<http://heart.muzak.com/what/grants.aspx>

### **Zaner-Bloser: National Handwriting Contest**

The 2010 Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest encourages legible handwriting by testing the printing (or "manuscript") acumen of first and second graders and the cursive abilities of students in grades 2 through 8. Entries are judged on the Keys to Legibility: Shape, Slant, Spacing, and Size. Maximum award: recognition and a special prize package. Eligibility: students grades 1-8 whose school uses Zaner-Bloser Handwriting curricula. Deadline: March 15, 2010.

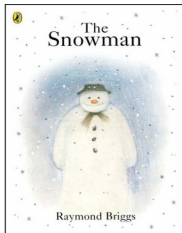
<http://www.zaner-bloser.com/educator/products/handwriting/national-contest.aspx?id=336>

### **Western Union Foundation: Family Scholarship Program**

The Western Union Foundation's Family Scholarship Program is an educational initiative for migrants, immigrants, and their families in the United States that aims to help two members of the same family move up the economic ladder through education. Scholarships may be used for tuition for college/university education, language acquisition classes, technical/skill training, and/or financial literacy. Maximum award: \$5,000. Eligibility: two members of the same family, aged 18 years or older, for whom the country of origin for at least one applicant is outside the U.S. Deadline: February 5, 2010.

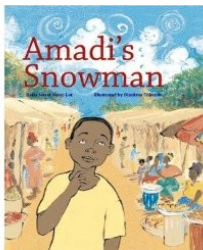
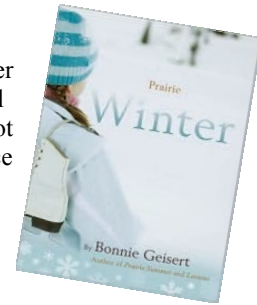
<http://corporate.westernunion.com/>

## Winter Book Corner



**The Snowman** by Raymond Briggs, is the tale of a boy who builds a [snowman](#) one winter's day. That night, at the stroke of twelve, the snowman comes to life. The first part of the story deals with the snowman's attempts to understand the appliances, toys and other [bric-a-brac](#) in the boy's house, all while keeping quiet enough not to wake the boy's parents. The two then venture back outside and go for a ride on a motorcycle, disturbing many animals: pheasants, rabbits, a barn owl, a fox and a brown horse.

**Prairie Winter** by Bonnie Geisert. All Rachel really wants is to go to school in town with her friends, convince her father to install a telephone in their distant home, and not have to shovel snow and feed cattle during the cold, windy winter months; then comes the winter that will not end. Bad storms constantly require school to close early and stay closed for days. During Once again, Rachel and her sisters are separated from their family, with no means to communicate. Town living offers many advantages, but before the winter ends, Rachel's homesickness becomes so strong that she even misses feeding cattle in the cold.



**Amadi's Showman.** Amadi, a mischievous young boy in Nigeria, believes he can become a successful businessman without learning to read. But one day, after running away to the market, he spots an older boy reading about a strange white creature with a carrot for a nose. Amadi soon realizes that learning to read will open up new worlds for him, and introduce him to places and ideas he never knew existed outside his village.

## Hanukkah Books



**Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins** by Eric A. Kimmel and Trina Schart Hyman (Holiday House, 1994). While goblins want to ruin Hanukkah, they are foiled by Hershel.

**Hurray for Hanukkah!** by Fran Manushkin (Random House Books for Young Readers, 2001).



**Sharing Blessings: Children's Stories for Exploring the Spirit of the Jewish Holidays** by Rachel Musleah and Michael Klayman (Jewish

**My Two Grandmothers** by Effin Older (Harcourt Brace, 2000). The story of a child with one grandmother who celebrates Hanukkah and the other who celebrates Christmas.



**The Trees of the Dancing Goats** by Patricia Polacco (Simon & Schuster, 1996). Friends of different faiths celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas.



The state network security system has changed the initial URL address of all state agencies.

If you type in our old address, it will revert to the new education.ne.gov until early summer 2010. Please begin using the new address and change your bookmarks now.

Nebraska Department of Education Homepage  
[www.education.ne.gov](http://www.education.ne.gov)

Section/division name changes HAVE not occurred.



The Native American Education website will be rolled into the Multicultural Education website February 1, 2010. The Multicultural Education site is currently under major revisions.

<http://www.education.ne.gov/mce>

## Upcoming Dates

### Native American Education Advisory Council Meetings

Chadron

February 22, 2010  
May 10, 2010



Wayne

February 9, 2010  
April 27, 2010